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V.

COL. INGERSOLL AND CHRISTIANITY.

I HAVE read with much interest Colonel Ingersoll's reply to Dr. Henry M. Field. I have never before read any of Mr. Ingersoll's strictures upon Christianity, but I am aware that many good people regard his views with horror, as calculated to throw doubt and discredit upon the Christian religion. I am myself a firm believer in Christ and *His* Christianity; but I do not entertain any such apprehensions. The truth is a rock which will withstand the beating of any man's eloquence, however great. Colonel Ingersoll may doubt that the sun shines, but his assertion to that effect need give no disquiet to men of ordinary eyesight. But, if I may judge from this article, his attacks are not so much directed against the essential truths of the Christian system, as against the errors and absurdities that have grown up around it, and which are altogether of human origin. And if some of the errors have even crept into the narrative parts of the Old and New Testaments, I do not see that they need to shake our belief in the substantial truth of the history. Paul believed that the world was to come to an end in his day; but does that detract from his credibility when he asserts that he saw the risen Christ on the way to Damascus? The white lily often springs from a black and noisome pool, and it is only natural that some foulness should then cling to its roots. The early books of the Bible were written in a dark and superstitious age, and I should question their authenticity if there did not cling to them some of the superstitions of that remote time. But do these superstitions invalidate the abundantly supported historical facts that God chose Abraham to be the father of a great people; that He led that people out of bondage in Egypt; gave them through Moses a system of laws far in advance of the age; and subsequently, through the incomparable man, Jesus Christ, assured them, and us, and all who shall come after us to the latest time, that He is the loving Father of all mankind? These facts neither Colonel Ingersoll, nor any other man, can shake; and I conceive that he will do an essential service to Bible truth if he shall clear away some of the rubbish which has gathered about it, and now hides its supernal beauty from the world.

STILLMAN FORCYTHE.

VI.

NOTE FROM HENRY IRVING.

THE "combination" system by which theatres are occupied by traveling organizations, instead as formerly by their own stock companies, has become as general in England as it is here. There are now no stock companies in Great Britain outside of London. Recognizing that this state of affairs gave young actors no chance of the schooling so absolutely necessary to artistic progress, Mr. Henry Irving, in his latest provincial tour, took occasion to urge the erection of theatres by the municipalities of the large cities, and the leasing of them to managers who would maintain stock companies. His attention having been called to the paper in the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* for November, "Wanted, a Representative Theatre," he sent its author the following letter:

NEW YORK, November 9, 1887.

MY DEAR MR. MAGNUS:

I have read your excellent article with great interest, and I don't think anything can be added to it. A State-aided theatre is certainly less visionary in America than in England, where the prejudices of a certain class of the community would probably forbid any national subvention to theatrical management; but I

agree with you that such a project as you propose, which is on a much larger scale than a merely municipal theatre, must depend for realization on private enterprise. The undertaking would be arduous, but, with good management, I believe it would eventually pay its way. My own proposal is essentially different, for I would not apply it to London, where we have already a number of trained companies. Municipal theatres are necessary, in my opinion, in our large provincial cities, which are now dependent entirely on traveling companies from the metropolis. Such a scheme as I suggest would revive the independent organization of the chief local theatre, provide a training for young actors, and, if properly directed, throw no burden on the rates. But you will see that, in the nature of things, this would be a much smaller affair than a national theatre.

(Signed)

HENRY IRVING.

VII.

SHELLEY'S MORALITY.

In a recently published essay, Mr. Charles Dudley Warner passes criticism on Shelley's moral code as shown in "Prometheus Unbound." But he reveals himself as wholly misconceiving it. He says: "In the poem Zeus stands for law, for faith, Christianity, custom, superstition, wrong, for every tyranny over the human mind; Prometheus for the universal love which dissolves all law and leaves man free."

Prometheus is the hero of the poem, the deliverer of mankind from oppression, the opposer of Zeus. At first under the thralldom of Zeus, he at last escapes and beholds the downfall of the tyrant. But is it true that Shelley represents Zeus as "law, faith, Christianity?" He certainly does let him stand for *false* "custom, superstition, and every tyranny." Shelley was a true scientist and believed in law. He believed in the highest moral law, that of love and justice. His definition of art, that it is true art only as connected with morality, shows how truly he revered the moral. His belief in justice is shown in his description of man when he shall have become renovated; then he is to be "gentle, *just*, and wise." As to "faith," it is Prometheus who represents that. He is the doomed victim of a tyrant, suffering every agony; yet he has faith in his deliverance, in the eternal downfall of evil, and the permanent establishment of the good.

Zeus did represent *perverted* Christianity. Shelley saw so much mock religion, so base a tyranny of the Church over her subjects, binding them to unreasoning and barbarous beliefs, that he was led to denounce Christianity as then existing. But any one who reads his poems aright will find them permeated through and through with the spirit of true Christianity. Of "Prometheus Unbound" can this especially be said; it is ever universal good-will and peace that he aspires for; the suppression of evil in all its forms that he desires.

Mr. Warner seems to have been misled by the use of words and thus failed to give the spirit of Shelley's belief due weight and justice. The dethronement of Zeus is the climax of the poem, but does it follow that Shelley denounces a God of love, purity, and justice? He says himself that, "under many a name and form has Jupiter, the Tyrant of the World, existed, abhorred of God." Thus he acknowledges that Highest Existence, and as very far apart from him whose doom he pronounces.

Mr. Warner seems led astray by the art-form in which Shelley has embodied a beautiful and truly religious conception of the world. "What basis," he asks, "has Shelley's conception in any conceivable system of ethics or philosophy?" What? we repeat, why that of the truest and strongest. Prometheus typifies the